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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [PHUM](#) [VZ](#) [FR](#) [CO](#)
SUBJECT: EMBASSY ANALYSIS OF HOSTAGE PROOF-OF-LIFE
INFORMATION CAPTURED BY COLOMBIAN SECURITY FORCES

REF: BOGOTA 8305

Classified By: Ambassador William R. Brownfield
Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY

¶1. (S) Colombian Security Forces captured three suspected Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) members in possession of proof-of-life (POL) for sixteen hostages, including U.S. citizen Defense Departments contractors Tom Howes, Keith Stansell, and Marc Gonsalves on November 29, 2007 (reftel). We understand the interagency will conduct a formal forensic analysis of the captured material, but we determined that the POL information appears consistent with the most recent Embassy assessment that the three U.S. hostages remain under the control of the FARC First Front. Nothing in the evidence indicated the hostage's exact location. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (S) The Colombian Army's Regional Military Intelligence Center-8, conducted a November 29 raid on a private home in Bogota in response to Colombian intelligence information indicating the presence of FARC-produced POL evidence on several high value hostages at the residence. The raid resulted in the detention of three (one male and two female) suspected FARC sympathizers/members and the recovery of POL evidence for sixteen high value hostages held by the FARC.

¶3. (S) The POL information indicated that the FARC produced the materials to support Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez's effort to negotiate a "humanitarian exchange" of FARC-held hostages for FARC prisoners in Colombian jails. It remains unclear whether Chavez received any POL information, however analysis suggests the existence of additional POL material not seized in the November 29 raid.

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS/REPORTS:

¶4. (S) OCTOBER 16, 2007: FARC Eastern Bloc Commander Jorge Briceno Suarez, alias "Mono Jojoy" reportedly directed First Front Commander Gerardo Aguilar Ramirez, alias "Cesar", to produce POL on former Colombian presidential candidate and dual French-Colombian national Ingrid Betancourt, as well as seven Colombian military and police hostages.

¶5. (S) NOVEMBER 6, 2007: Chavez announced that FARC Commander Manuel Marulanda, alias "Tirofijo", ordered the production of POL on all FARC held "exchangeable" hostages.

¶6. (S) NOVEMBER 6, 2007: "Cesar" reportedly finished the POL on Ingrid Betancourt and the seven others and sent it north to the FARC 7th Front area of operations.

¶7. (S) NOVEMBER 22, 2007: Two intelligence reporting streams indicated that the FARC was attempting to deliver POL evidence in Bogota, probably for further transfer to Venezuela.

¶8. (S) NOVEMBER 29, 2007: Colombian security forces raided a residence in Bogota; arresting three FARC sympathizers/members and recovering the POL on 16 exchangeable hostages.

¶9. (S) Initial analysis of the five videos, seven letters, and digital photographs has not provided specific information on the location of the three U.S. hostages at the date of production of the POL. The analysis reinforced previous assessments indicating that the three U.S. hostages remain under the control of the First FARC Front. Salient points from the Embassy Intelligence Fusion Center analysis included:

- Video POL on all sixteen hostages, including the three Americans, appears to have been produced between October 22 and 24, 2007.

- Initial reports indicated that the three individuals arrested with the POL evidence are First FARC Front sympathizers/members.

- The sixteen hostages portrayed in the POL evidence appeared to be separated into at least two groups, possibly located near one another.

- FARC First Front Company Commander Alexander Farfan Suarez, alias "Enrique Gafas", remains directly responsible for the security of at least the group that includes the Americans.

- A FARC fighter seen in several of the videos has been tentatively identified as "Tiro(n)", a FARC First Front member.

- The camp in which the video POL was produced appears to have some infrastructure with a possible building and farm animals.

- While there are no indications that any hostages were co-located with Eastern Bloc Commander alias "Mono Jojoy", it appeared that he made minor decisions relating to high value hostages.

¶10. (S) Information provided by Colombian National Police Officer John Frank Pinchao, who escaped from the FARC on April 28, 2007, indicated that the three U.S. hostages had been under the control of the FARC First Front since mid-late 2006 through April 2007. Following Pinchao's escape, both technical and human intelligence confirmed the presence of the U.S. hostages inside the First Front's area of operations as of May-June 2007. We assess that as of early December 2007, the three U.S. hostages probably remained within the First Front area of operations under the direct control of First FARC Front Company Commander "Enrique Gafas". We will continue to focus our limited technical and human intelligence assets against the FARC First Front.

Brownfield